



November is Native American Heritage and Lung Cancer Awareness Month.

Tribal and indigenous communities are often highly impacted by environmental conditions and pollutants (ex. radon, wood smoke, mold and moisture, poor ventilation) which can all result in or enhance poor indoor air quality. When attending EPA and ITEP (Intertribal Training for Environmental Professionals) trainings for air quality, it is often pointed out that traditional knowledge is tied in with the seasons, the traditional plants and animals, the first foods and certain tribal/cultural celebrations. Therefore, tribes and indigenous communities feel the impact of environmental conditions both in and outside of the home long before anyone else. Therefore, many tribal representatives are attending air quality trainings to ready themselves and their people for environmental changes. Lung Cancer will account for about 13% of all new cancers in the United State in 2019 and is the leading cause of cancer death among both men and women. Native American and tribal populations are disproportional affected by asthma and learning to manage indoor environmental triggers is important for both lung health and asthma. There are many things you can do to help mitigate these asthma triggers for both you and your child. So, as part of Native American Heritage and Lung Cancer Awareness Month here are things you can do in your home to address air quality issues and better protect your lungs.

A. Secondhand Smoke

- I. Don't let anyone smoke near your child.
- II. If you smoke – until you can quit, don't smoke in your home or car.
- III. Breathing in secondhand smoke increases your chances of getting lung cancer 20-30%.

B. Dust Mites

- I. Wash bedding in hot water once a week. Dry completely.
- II. Use dust proof covers on pillows and mattresses.
- III. Vacuum carpets and furniture every week.
- IV. Choose stuffed toys that you can wash. Wash stuffed toys in hot water. Dry completely before your child plays with the toy.
- V. Dust often with a damp cloth.
- VI. Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter on carpet and fabric-covered furniture to reduce dust build-up. People with asthma or allergies should leave the area being vacuumed.

C. Molds

- I. If mold is a problem in your home, you need to clean up the mold and eliminate sources of moisture.
- II. If you see mold on hard surfaces, clean it up with soap and water. Let the area dry completely.



- III. Use exhaust fans or open a window in the bathroom and kitchen when showering, cooking or washing dishes.
- IV. Fix water leaks as soon as possible to keep mold from growing.
- V. Dry damp or wet things completely within one to two days to keep mold from growing.
- VI. Maintain low indoor humidity, ideally between 30-50% relative humidity. Humidity levels can be measured by hygrometers, which are available at local hardware stores.

D. Cockroaches and Other Pests

- I. Insecticides and pesticides are not only toxic to pests — they can harm people too. Try to use pest management methods that pose less of a risk. Keep counters, sinks, tables and floors clean and free of clutter.
- II. Clean dishes, crumbs and spills right away.
- III. Store food in airtight containers.
- IV. Seal cracks or openings around or inside cabinets.

E. Nitrogen Dioxide

- I. Gas cooking stoves: If you have an exhaust fan in the kitchen, use it when you cook. Never use the stove to keep you warm or heat your house.
- II. Unvented kerosene or gas space heaters: Use the proper fuel and keep the heater adjusted the right way. Open a window slightly or use an exhaust fan when you are using the heater.

F. Outdoor air pollution

- I. Monitor the Air Quality Index on your local weather report.
- II. Know when and where air pollution may be bad.
- III. Regular exercise is healthy. Check your local air quality to know when to play and when to take it a little easier.
- IV. Schedule outdoor activities at times when the air quality is better. In the summer, this may be in the morning.
- V. Stay inside with the windows closed on high pollen days and when pollutants are high.
- VI. Use your air conditioner to help filter the air coming into the home. Central air systems are the best.
- VII. Remove indoor plants if they irritate or produce symptoms for you or your family.
- VIII. Pay attention to asthma warning signs. If you start to see signs, limit outdoor activity. Be sure to talk about this with your child's doctor.

G. Chemical Irritant

- I. Make sure your child is not around.
- II. Open windows or doors or use an exhaust fan.
- III. Always follow the instructions on the product label.



H. Wood Smoke

- I. To help reduce smoke, make sure to burn dry wood that has been split, stacked, covered and stored for at least 6 months.
- II. Have your stove and chimney inspected every year by a certified professional to make sure there are no gaps, cracks, unwanted drafts or to remove dangerous creosote build-up.
- III. build-up.
- IV. If possible, replace your old wood stove with a new, cleaner heating appliance. Newer wood stoves are at least 50% more efficient and pollute 70% less than older models.
- V. This can help make your home healthier and safer and help cut fuel costs.

Sources:

https://www.epa.gov/asthma/asthma-triggers-gain-control?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=